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17 May 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR: CIA Career Service Board

SUBJECT: Performance Evaluation

1. On 13 May the Career Service Board made the final of a series of decisions concerning the abolition of the PER and the utilization of a new Fitness Report. Each successive decision, in my opinion, has made it less likely that CIA will have a useful and acceptable evaluation system. The final result can have such serious impact on employee morale that I would be remiss in my professional obligation if I did not write the following paragraphs in an attempt to clarify the problems and implications involved.

2. Along with sex, politics and religion, evaluation procedures should be added as a topic about which it is impossible to have a rational discussion. This controversial nature of evaluation procedures and how they are to be used makes it imperative that great care be taken to insure their general acceptability prior to making a widespread or radical change in a system. The first task force appointed by the Board developed a report to be applied only to employees during their provisional period and for the sole purpose of aiding in determination of their suitability for retention and CIA Career Service. The report would (1) not be shown the individual; (2) be used centrally by a few high-level individuals having access to technical advice and studies; (3) not necessarily be scored but could be if the Board so desired. The problem of acceptability of the report did not loom large since it would be used for relatively few people and its use carefully controlled. The system would have had a reasonable chance of success.

3. Subsequent task forces were given narrower directives on problems with such broader implications. On 13 May, decision by the Board results in a report which will be (1) used for a multiplicity of purposes; (2) applied repeatedly to every individual in the Agency; (3) used by local as well as Headquarters personnel officers; and (4) shown to the employee at the option of the individual supervisor. Comparison of the two sets of conditions makes

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apparent the fact that a report for a given set of procedures and purposes is now to be utilized in a different fashion for different ends.

4. The shifting nature of the directives to these task forces, further complicated by the small span of time in which each task force was asked to complete its work has made it difficult for anyone to keep the evaluation problem in clear perspective and resulted in

- a. The adoption of a form containing features inconsistent with its proposed use and without full consideration of the many policies that should govern its uses.
- b. The probability that a great deal of controversy will follow the report's introduction, with the possibility of serious impact on the morale of employees.

5. Some of the most important factors to be considered in the design and use of rating systems are:

- a. Ratings, whether scored or unscored, reflect the opinion of one person by another, and therefore, a single report will never have the objectivity that is desired. As a practical matter, it appears that the only way to reduce subjectivity in ratings is by obtaining opinions of a number of supervisors as an employee holds a series of jobs.
- b. Performance evaluation is more than a rating form: it is a complete system, including policies governing use of such forms.
- c. No personnel action should be taken automatically concerning the individual on the basis of the results of Fitness Reports alone. Decisions should be made by responsible persons having access to all the information available concerning the individual.
- d. Success of rating systems will vary in relation to at least the following factors:
 - (1) The degree to which purpose of the system is specific.
 - (2) The degree of acceptance by users of the form in relation to its stated purpose.

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- (3) The degree of understanding that can be given the users at the time a new procedure is introduced.

6. An analysis of the proposed Fitness Report reveals its unsuitability for periodic evaluation of job performance and for serving as the basis for discussion between supervisor and employee. It does not contain a great number of questions that are specific to job performance and it does contain a great deal of information concerning personal characteristics of the individual which, while not relevant to evaluation of job performance, are relevant to a decision on retention with the Agency or admission to Career Service.

7. A report designed for periodic evaluation of job performance should have the following characteristics:

- a. It should deal with on-the-job behavior during a specified period of time and be adapted to a wide variety of jobs.
- b. It should be designed so as to serve as a real basis for discussion between supervisor and his subordinate of behavior pertinent to job performance.
- c. The individual should be informed at the beginning of the rating period on what type of job performance he is going to be rated.
- d. The form should provide the possibility for inclusion of specific behavior instances deserving special commendation or criticism.
- e. It should include factual records on attendance, punctuality, or provide for the possibility of relating these records to the form.
- f. It should be shown to the employee in its entirety.
- g. It should contain recommendations for training.
- h. It need not lend itself to scoring, and
- i. it should contain a statement of the job performance factors which are to be stressed during the next rating period.

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8. Two specific questions raised during the 13 May meeting of the Board deserve somewhat fuller answers than time permitted giving:

- a. The first question concerned the possibility of scoring the Fitness Report. As noted at the time, this report lends itself to quantitative scoring on the basis of appropriate studies. It should be added that development of a truly meaningful score requires extensive studies. Practically, it is possible to develop scores which would have rough screening uses. Even for a very minimum use, such scores can not, however, be developed until rating forms of a sizable sampling of employees have been received.
 - (1) Use of a quantitative score raises questions of where that score is to be placed and who has access to it. There is the possibility of so using such a score as to start an endless controversy. The difference between the interpretation of a person's relative standing in a select group (as expressed by scores) and his standing in relation to some kind of absolute standard (as expressed by an unscored report) has never, to my knowledge, been successfully explained to any large group of people rated, military or civilian. No one reacts favorably to the idea he is generally competent but still is in the bottom ten percent of the employee group. Using scores requires utilization of technically trained personnel and extreme care in guarding their circulation and use.
- b. The second question concerned the possibility of the usual Personnel and Placement Officers using the Fitness Report in relation to assignment, reassignment, and other personnel decisions. This was replied to in a somewhat negative manner by saying that this report could be used for such purposes insofar as the decisions involved relative evaluation of the individual. It needs to be stressed, however, that decisions such as assignment and reassignment will require additional specific information that is not contained on this form and that no single form will be all that is needed for the many personnel decisions that are necessary. Reliance on a single form for all kinds of personnel decisions cannot be expected to result in a uniform excellence in all types of decision.

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9. It is recommended:

- a. Regardless of which of the courses of action listed below is adopted, the entire problem of evaluation for CIA multiple purposes be assigned to technical specialists for study under the supervision of a specially appointed task force. The studies should be given ample time, tentative deadline for completion established as at least a year after initiation and the studies should include consideration of policies and ways of insuring acceptability.
- b. Both the PER and Fitness Report be used.
 - (1) The Fitness Report be used during the employee's provisional period.
 - (2) The PER be used thereafter.
- c. If there can be but one evaluation report in use,
 - (1) The PER, with modifications to incorporate as many as possible of the principles in Paragraph 7, be used for the present.
- d. If the 13 May decision of the Board to utilize the present Fitness Report stands,
 - (1) Section IV be eliminated as wholly inappropriate to the purpose of periodic evaluation.
 - (2) The report be tried out on a small scale in selected offices in order that the Board may have a fuller knowledge of what the impact on employee morale will be.

10. It is respectfully requested that this memorandum be made part of the official minutes of the CIA Career Service Board.

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 Ph. D.
Psychologist

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